

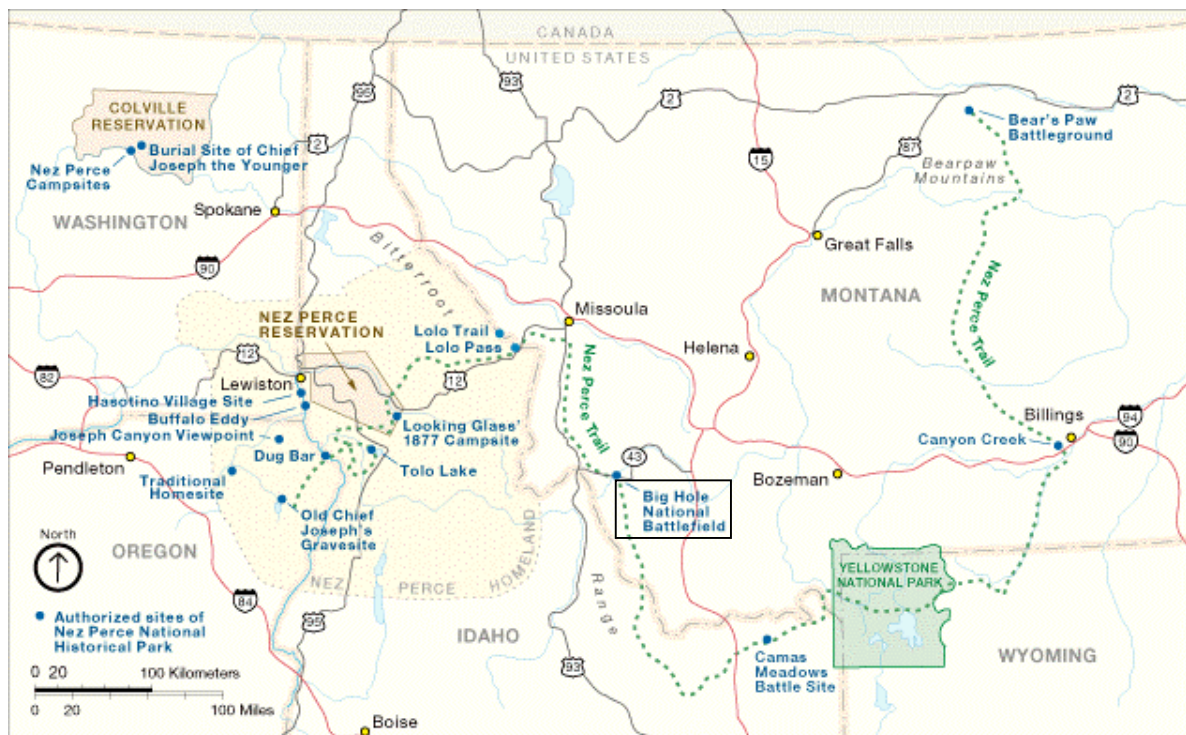
# Report

## Big Hole National Battlefield

### ■ 1.0 Site Description

The Big Hole National Battlefield is a memorial for the people who fought and died in the Nez Perce War of 1877. This is the site where the Nez Perce Indians fought for their lives after being pursued by the U.S. Army. At the time, a national policy required American Indians to be placed on reservations. This policy was the cause for hostilities. As shown in Figure 1, Big Hole is part of a 38-site Nez Perce National Historical Park that commemorates the Nez Perce Trail that spans five states – Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Big Hole is located 10 miles west of Wisdom, Montana on State Highway 43, between Interstate 15 and Highway 93. The nearest major city is Butte, Montana, 75 miles away from Big Hole. Missoula, Montana is approximately 110 miles northwest of Big Hole.

**Figure 1. Location of Big Hole National Battlefield**



Big Hole contains approximately 656 acres and includes the following main sites:

- **The Nez Perce Camp Trail** – This 1.2-mile trail leads to the site where the Nez Perce Indians were camped and attacked by the U.S. Army and civilian volunteers on the night of August 9, 1887.
- **The Siege Trail** – This one-mile round trip trail leads to the area where Nez Perce warriors held the U.S. Army and civilian volunteers under siege.
- **The Visitor Center** – The Visitor Center contains a small museum with exhibits of Nez Perce culture, military clothing and equipment, and a small bookstore. Some self-guided information as well as interpretive programs can also be found at the center. According to the superintendent, the Visitor Center is currently operating at or over visitor capacity.

Big Hole charges a summertime entrance fee of \$2.00 per person or \$4.00 per family. Visitation has averaged around 50,000 persons per year. The peak season occurs from June through September, with the off-peak season occurring between November and January. Visitors typically come to Big Hole because of an interest in the area, or are passing by en-route to other recreational areas such as Yellowstone National Park or Glacier National Park. In the spring and fall seasons, school groups bring in approximately 3,000 to 5,000 visitors. The average time a visitor spends at the Park is from one to three hours.

The primary transportation issue relates to a high amount of winter truck traffic on State Route 43 between Highways 93 and 95. State Route 43 is the primary access road into Big Hole and is also used by truckers as a shortcut or bypass route. However, since visitation in the winter months is relatively low, this transport issue does not significantly impact the visitor experience and transportation access to the Park.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

There are no existing Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) or any direct public transit services to the Park. All visitors use private automobiles to access the Park.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

There does not appear to be any need for an ATS since visitation is relatively low, the access roads are rarely congested, and parking availability is not a concern. The remoteness of the site also makes any form of ATS infeasible.

## ■ 4.0 Basis for ATS Needs

There is no basis for ATS needs.

## ■ 5.0 Bibliography

The Big Hole National Battlefield Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/biho/>).

The Nez Perce National Historical Park Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/nepe/>).

## ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Jon G. James, superintendent, Big Hole National Battlefield